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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

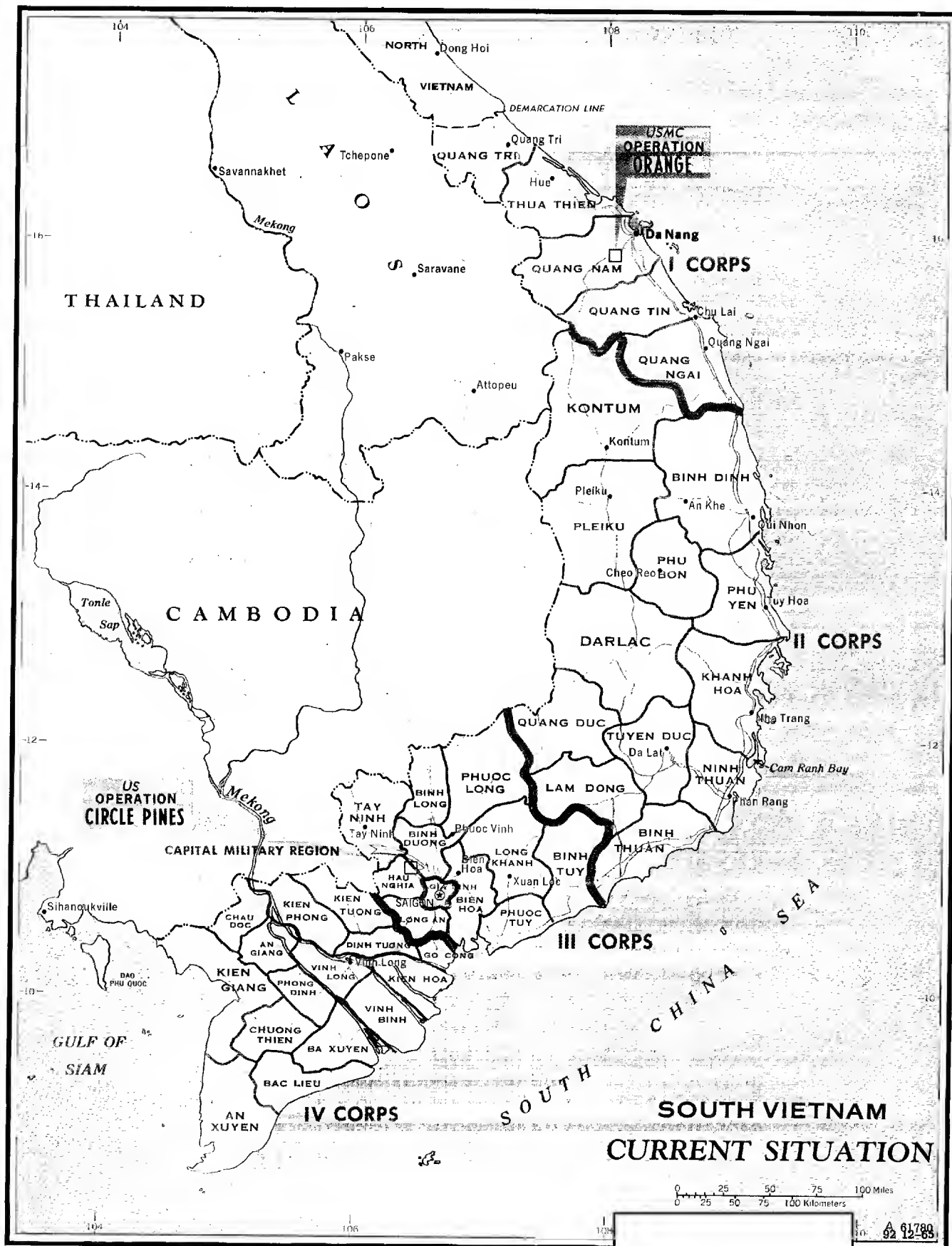
[Political Developments in South Vietnam: South Vietnamese Marines are evidently still prepared to enter the city of Da Nang, but a government show of force may await new political moves.]

[Military Security Service chief Colonel Loan, presently designated to command the Saigon units now at Da Nang air base, told [] that he had authority to move when conditions seemed "ripe," but that the military phase of the plan to reassert control over Da Nang might be postponed "a few days." Loan also stated that Premier Ky was considering new political steps to end the crisis, and that these would probably include further concessions to the Buddhists.]

[Earlier in the day at Da Nang, Loan had appeared in a highly emotional state, asserting that the marines must move within 24 hours to be successful and that some unit commanders might move even without orders. Loan had also stated that Deputy Premier Co was a virtual hostage of I Corps commander Chuan in Da Nang, although both Co and Chuan have made public statements that the situation is quieting and that they are working toward a peaceful settlement.]

In Saigon yesterday, the government convened a consultative session of some 30 political and religious leaders to prepare for a national political convention. The session was boycotted by Buddhist Institute leaders, whose spokesmen have variously declared in the past few days that the political convention is a step backward, and that the government has promised an elected national assembly within five months. []

[] there was a general consensus to convene the political convention next week and to set up a constituent body, half appointed and half drawn from provincial and municipal councils.



The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Two battalions of the US 25th Infantry Division have terminated the nine-day search-and-destroy Operation CIRCLE PINES northwest of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province. Results were mixed. One hundred and fifty-seven Viet Cong were killed and eight captured, compared to US casualties of 32 killed and 195 wounded. In addition, 14 US armored personnel carriers, 12 tanks, and two helicopters received varying degrees of damage from enemy ground fire and mines.

Battalion-strength US Marine task force elements conducting Operation ORANGE in Quang Nam Province have uncovered a Viet Cong river harbor with extensive caves and fortifications 20 miles southwest of Da Nang. Light to sporadic contact has been reported during the past 24 hours, bringing cumulative Communist losses in the seven-day ground sweep to 54 killed, as against marine casualties of 18 killed and 87 wounded.

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According to information from MACV, the current political unrest has had a retarding effect on coordinated US/ARVN operations, but no effect on unilateral operations by US or other free world forces. The extent to which ARVN military operations are being hampered is in direct proportion to the degree of political unrest in any given area, with the major impact in I Corps. However, nearly all ARVN units are being affected to some extent by the increased demands of security and riot control duty, which is detracting from offensive operations. Logistical activities particularly construction, port operations, and POL distribution have been seriously disrupted in the major centers of political agitation.

Communist Political Developments: Vietnamese Communist propaganda is increasing its efforts to turn the present political unrest in South Vietnam into a movement directed chiefly against the American presence there. In its second major statement in two days, the Liberation Press on 6 April called for an increased struggle against the "US imperialists," claiming that this was the major objective of both the Liberation Front and the urban struggle movement. The statement called for united action of all the antigovernment groups with the Liberation Front to oppose the "Americans and their lackeys."

Hanoi propaganda has also echoed the theme of an identity of purpose between the struggle of the liberation forces and the present political movement in the cities. Recent articles in the party daily have claimed that the "acute contradiction" between the Americans and the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people was the cause of the present struggle.

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Communist China: Indications continue to be received that Mao Tse-tung--whose activities have now gone unreported for 19 weeks--may be incapacitated but is still mentally alert.

On 26 March, a Chinese Government spokesman, answering a foreign newsman's question, asserted that "Chairman Mao is in very good health," and called stories to the contrary "vicious fabrications." His statement was not published in China. On 29 March, a Hong Kong Communist newspaper reprinted a photograph of a smiling, healthy Mao from a 25 March Canton party daily. There was no indication when or where the picture was taken, an unusual circumstance that only increases doubts about Mao's condition.

Mao is probably still able to function. Otherwise his deputy, Liu Shao-chi, almost certainly would not have left the country. Mao has been out of Peking since mid-October and probably is in east or central China where he has often gone for winter rest cures in the past.

Several ordinarily active top leaders have been out of sight for long periods during the past four months--possibly at Mao's side to keep him informed and to carry out his decisions. Among these are Chief of Staff Lo Jui-ching, and Yang Shang-kun, Mao's personal link with the party secretariat, who dropped out of sight simultaneously with Mao late in November.

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France: [The last of three nuclear reactors at Chinon has begun operating, increasing French capacity for both electric power output and plutonium production.]

[The three Chinon reactors are intended primarily for electric power production. By 1967, when all three should be operating at full capacity, they could generate up to 750 megawatts of electric power, about four percent of estimated French consumption at that time.]

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Ecuador: The Country Team believes that because of provisional President Yerovi's "inexperience and irresolution" the government's capacity to maintain internal security is being impaired.

The national police are handicapped by lack of financial support from the government. In addition, they will be operating under a new commander.

During the recent administrative chaos, an extremist temporarily took possession of the offices of the Directorate General of Security--the political police--and delivered to Communist-led students data on informants used by the former government. The expected intimidation of these persons will make more difficult the penetration of organizations that the government needs to watch.

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Zambia: Wildcat strikes by African workers are threatening to disrupt Zambia's vital coppermining industry. The mine workers have the sympathy of most Zambian Africans--including some members of President Kaunda's cabinet--in their protests against the disparities between white and African wage rates in the mines. The government is establishing a commission of inquiry which it hopes will get the miners back to work and obviate the need for more drastic action to end the strikes.

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Dominican Republic: [An alliance between Joaquin Balaguer and Rafael Bonnelly, both unofficial presidential candidates in the election scheduled for 1 June, may be in the offing. In the past Balaguer has confidently predicted that his Reformist Party could defeat Juan Bosch's Dominican Revolutionary Party without coming to terms with Bonnelly's newly formed National Integration Movement. However,]

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[] Balaguer is quietly surveying the possibilities of an alignment between these two mutually antagonistic groups. *For his part, Bonnelly now also reportedly agrees that his party will have to form a coalition with Balaguer in order to defeat Bosch.]

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Haiti: [President Duvalier apparently has been taking steps to counter suspected antigovernment plotting. Measures have included a crackdown on the military and on the dreaded secret police, the "ton ton macoutes." There are unconfirmed reports that a number of officers, soldiers, and secret police have recently been executed. In the past, Duvalier has often ordered indiscriminate executions when he felt his position was threatened.]

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